



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham Commemorates National Vietnam War Veterans Day at State Capitol

PETE HARCKHAM March 30, 2023

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*Albany, NY* – New York State Senator Pete Harckham commemorated National Vietnam War Veterans Day at the State Capitol on March 29 by introducing a resolution to the full Senate and welcoming a contingent of local Vietnam War veterans in attendance from the 40th Senate District.

“Because they served with tremendous sacrifice and courage, today we pay homage to the brave men and women who served in the Vietnam War,” said Harckham. “Sadly, many veterans from this war bear physical and mental injuries, many of them life lasting. To our everlasting shame, these veterans were often overlooked and even mistreated when they returned home instead of being honored.”

Harckham continued, “Today, we know better. Vietnam veterans, like all of our veterans, deserve our respect and gratitude for putting on a uniform, wearing our flag on their arm and serving our country. What we acknowledge now, more than ever, is that our Vietnam War veterans learned to protect each other—and continue to protect each other today, decades after the war ended. Indeed, their service to our country has persisted for years, even decades, after they took off the uniform.”

In entering his resolution, Harckham concluded that the State of New York “wishes to show its Vietnam veterans the respect and appreciation they deserve, but did not always get when they returned home.”

To see a video of Harckham introducing the Vietnam War Veterans Day resolution in the State Senate, click [here](#).

The Vietnam War veterans that traveled to Albany as guests of Harckham were Michael O’Connor, Commander of the Ossining VFW and Vice Commander of Ossining American Legion; Steve Kucerak from Bedford and a member of the Bedford Veterans Advisory Committee; Michael DeGloria, Jack Litchauer and Hilton Ortiz from Carmel; James Mecca from Yorktown Heights; Robert Somerville and Lu Caldara from Ossining; Bill Wasser from Brewster; Louis Ferrari and John Pagliuca from Cortlandt Manor; Patricia Ephraim and Luigi Villani (who was joined by his wife Susan) from Mahopac; and Robert Anderson from Croton-on-Hudson.

“I definitely got choked up hearing from Senator Harckham and his colleagues about how grateful they are for our service,” said Villani, an Army Specialist E-4 who spent nine months in Vietnam during the war. “Being honored like this meant a great deal to me.”

Chester Edwards, executive director of the Westchester County Veterans Alliance and a board member of Hudson Valley Honor Flight who resides in Port Chester, attended the event as well.

“The Vietnam War Veterans Day commemoration at the State Capitol was truly appreciated,” said Edwards. “We received a warm welcome from Senator Harckham and were touched by the kind words that were spoken and the heartfelt thanks given to us.”

This year was the eleventh anniversary of National Vietnam Veterans Day, which was proclaimed by President Barack Obama back in 2012.

From the time the United States carried out its first combat mission against the Viet Cong on January 12, 1962, until when the last American troops left Vietnam on March 29, 1973, more than three million Americans served their country, and more than 58,000 sacrificed their lives during the war. Among U.S. service men and women 300,000 were wounded, 75,000 permanently disabled and 1,200 remain missing and unaccounted for.

“There were many different aspects of service during the Vietnam War, and this event in Albany gave me an opportunity to speak with a number of fellow veterans who had served in the war,” said O’Connor, also an Army Specialist E-4 who was in Vietnam in 1964-1965. “It really is important to be reminded of the struggles that we all went through while serving our country.”